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SUBJECT: CONGOLESE TRADER ON UN SANCTIONS LIST MURDERED IN  
NORTH KIVU

¶1. (U) Congolese gold trader Kambale Kisoni Kidubai was shot and killed in Butembo, North Kivu by unidentified assailants at noon on July 5. He had been designated in March 2007, along with Butembo Airlines and Congocom Trading House, as subject to UN and U.S. sanctions for providing support to armed groups in Congo in violation of an international arms embargo.

¶2. (U) Security Council Resolution 1596 provided the following information on Kisoni's designation: "Kisoni participated in militia financing through gold trading (buying from the Front for National Integration (FNI) and selling to Uganda Commercial Impex and smuggling across the DRC/Uganda border). He "used his airline -- Butembo Airlines -- to transport FNI gold, rations, and weapons between Mongbwalu and Butembo." His Congocom Trading House, a gold trading house in Butembo, allowed him to "acquire almost all the gold production in the Mongbwalu district, which is controlled by the FNI. The FNI derive substantial income from taxes imposed on this production."

¶3. (SBU) According to press reports, the presumed killers, including one woman, stole a large sum of money and other valuables before shooting him. MONUC Goma told us July 6 that a security guard may also have been killed in the attack. Six individuals were arrested by Congolese security services in the Mutiri quarter of Butembo in the early afternoon and are being detained at the Kakwangura prison. The detainees are reportedly all foreigners, including two Ugandans and one Kenyan.

¶4. (SBU) MONUC Butembo's office told us the killing of Kisoni triggered panic among the population. Stores and schools closed immediately, and local residents gathered in front of the jail where the suspects were being held. MONUC Goma told us that Kisoni had allegedly made a fortune by trafficking in arms for various Ituri militia groups and owned several mansions in Butembo, in addition to the two companies designated along with him. Although the apparent motive for the killing is robbery, MONUC said a link between Kisoni's illegal activities and his assassination cannot be excluded.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Kisoni had recently requested a meeting with emboffs, and his lawyer had forwarded a lengthy dossier refuting charges made against him in U.N. reports. Speculation and rumors about his assassination are already rife. Certainly, Kisoni's checkered history of trade in gold and arms would strongly suggest the possibility that his murder was not random. End comment.

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